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Standardized testing has become a malevolent pressure inflicted upon student going through the United States’ education system. Beginning in elementary school, students are required to take standardized tests that will decide whether they are placed in advanced or low-level classes and if they will advance to the next grade. These tests are also a means for examining various school districts’ curriculums and teachers. Should students perform proficiently on the standardize tests, the schools are said to be very good and receive more funding. However, should the students perform poorly, the school districts will lose funding. Personally, I have much experience with standardized testing. I’ve been taking either the PSSAs, the PSATs, or the SATs at least every other year since my education began. This year, I’ve taken all of the above mentioned tests and will most likely be taking more in the coming months. In addition, I’ve been in classes that devote weeks at time to preparing for the standardized tests, for example, my SAT Prep class at the beginning of my junior year. Friends of mine, along with myself, completed the SAT Prep course, took the SATs, and then within a month we were required to take the PSSAs in school. As a result of all this testing, I feel unneeded stress has been inflicted upon me, and I have lost important time in my education.

Many people are against standardized testing, however there are also a great amount of people who are for the tests. These people argue the SAT and other leading standardized tests are an accurate way of making our education system more universal by making it so that all students across the country, in all different kinds of schools, are learning the same important material. Another angle taken by those supporting standardized tests claim that the tests make it so that the students are actually learning and building upon base skills instead of just memorizing facts for weekly tests in school. The tests also provide motivation for students to do well in school in order to achieve great tests scores and get into very good colleges and universities. The director of undergraduate admissions from Duke University declares in regards to the SAT that “It adds to our abilities to predict grades.” The tests also provide a way for colleges and universities to “weed out [students] who may have benefited from grade inflation” (College Entrance Exams Update).

Aside from the arguments supporting standardized testing, there are a great number of strong opinions and facts that contradict the pros. One of the most common dislikes of standardized tests is that they are biased against students who do not come for well-to-do backgrounds and good schools. The tests are also biased against students of minorities and those whose first language is not English. Opponents of standardized testing also claim that schools are basing their curriculums off of what is on the test, so they are for the most part “teaching the test” (How Standardized Testing Damages Education). School districts often change their curriculum to resemble what is on standardized tests, and they believe that increased test score mean that students are learning more. However, the test only reflects critical thinking skills, not actual knowledge of students. Atkinson from the University of California states in regards to the SAT that the “exam has no relationship to what [students] should study in high school.” Scores from tests only display how well a student’s tutor or preparation course was. An SAT tutor confirms this belief by claiming that the SATs are “completely inapplicable to the rest of life,” (College Entrance Exams Update).

If standardized testing is so awful, what are the alternatives to the tests? How are colleges expected to decide which students will excel in secondary education if not for comparing students’ SAT and ACT scores? Individual countries around the world have developed their own system of testing students preparing for attending college. In Canada, there is not a specific test that everyone must take like the SAT; instead, each college or university develops its own set of requirements for acceptance. As for examining the education system, the Canadian government implements annual tests similar to those in the U.S. in order to track students’ progress. In France and Germany, students take a final test at the end of their high school careers and success on the tests grants them admittance into universities. In England, students graduate at age sixteen and can choose to continue into a two-year program to prepare for A-level exams, a test similar to the SAT (A Look at Standardized Testing Around the Globe). These examples provide options for reform on our current excessive standardized testing. Another possibility resulting in the elimination of many standardized tests is colleges accepting portfolios and projects completed by students throughout their education careers in order to give a wide range of work for colleges to look at when compared to “one-shot tests,” a term keyed by Monty Neil from FairTest (College Entrance Exams Update).

In conclusion, the downsides to standardized testing outweigh the positive aspects. Standardized tests take important time out of our country’s students’ limited time for education for both test preparation and for taking the test itself. There are many alternatives to examining teachers – alternatives that are most likely better judges of whether or not teachers are dutifully performing their jobs. Standardizing testing is not an accurate measure of students’ knowledge and is a superfluous hindrance to the United States’ education system.